

March 16, 2010

I have been a state employee for over 32 years.

Because economic times have changed, reform of the operations of state government may be necessary at this time. I am therefore in support of HB 5954, however with amendment by removal of Sec . 19J. (1)(E). Referring to the requirements that must be met for a retirement eligible state employee to avail themselves to the retirement enhancement provisions of this bill, Paragraph (1) (E) states in its entirety,

"THE MEMBER OCCUPIES A POSITION SUBJECT TO THE SAME STATE HEALTH PLAN PREFERRED PROVIDER ORGANIZATION FOR EMPLOYEES FIRST HIRED ON OR AFTER APRIL 1, 2010."

As currently written, this language automatically excludes several hundred state employees that would otherwise qualify to retire under this bill. Through no choice of our own, we are excluded because we occupy positions that are not subject to the new state health plan. These positions are not subject to the new state health plan because the union representing those positions has not agreed to the plan for those newly hired after April 1, 2010. By virtue of currently occupying these positions, we have no choice about being covered by this union. Many of us, at all stages of our employment, have contacted the union to voice our disagreement with their position but they have held firm.

We are state employees subject to the defined benefit retirement system, and we realize it is of benefit to the State of Michigan to encourage us to retire as soon as possible. The retirement provisions outlined in HB 5954 would greatly encourage retirement eligible employees to retire prior to the beginning of the new fiscal year, but as currently written will exclude many of us from this opportunity.

Due to the language in Sec. 19J (1)(E), it is felt legislators may not realize it is excluding anyone. Whether HB 5954 is passed or not is up to the legislature, however, if it does pass, it should apply to everyone that has spent a majority of their adult life serving this state. By bringing this to the attention of this honorable committee, I would hope that this group of otherwise retirement eligible state employees would not be discriminated against, and I strongly **URGE YOU TO REMOVE (1) (E) from HB 5954**, so that it may fairly apply to all retirement eligible state employees.

Respectfully submitted,
Rebecca A. Treber